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Catching the Light of Christ: Shine, Beloved, Shine!

by Rev. Kim Wood, Conference Minister

In 1987, Shirley Erena Murray, in collaboration with composer Hal Hopson on the music, wrote the hymn "Give Thanks for Life," to the tune "Communion of Saints." Many of us, upon hearing this tune, would burst into the more commonly known "For All the Saints." On this All Saints Day, Murray's poetic lyrics have been on my mind. The second verse is particularly poignant as we thank God for the many who have come before us as faithful Jesus followers and as those who have helped shape our beloved United Church of Christ:



*Give thanks for those who made their life a light
caught from the Christ-flame, bursting through the night,
who touched the truth, who burned for what is right,
Alleluia! Alleluia!*

There have been many people, laity and clergy, who have discerned, inspired, coordinated, led, forged new paths, broken new ground, built seemingly impossible bridges, guided, taught, collaborated, and advocated for the muted and the marginalized that the UCC might become serve in the ways God has set before us. I marvel at the tenacity of leaders like Rev. James Wagner and Rev. Fred Hoskins, the first Co-Presidents of the United Church of Christ, who led the first delegations from the Evangelical and Reformed Church and the Congregational Christian Churches across that stage in Cleveland in 1957 that we might respond to God's call to serve in a new way. I am awed by leaders like Rev. Bill Johnson, Rev. Dr. (Mother) Yvonne Delk, and Ben Chavis, who have stood and stand strong in the face

of adversity, often at their own personal risk, to break down barriers and create broader paths of justice and inclusion. And I am humbled by the many unsung heroes in local congregations and ministry settings who have lived and continue to live out the Gospel of Jesus Christ in ways both big and small. These people, whose determination to shine the light of God's love "caught from the Christ-flame" into their communities and the world! Alleluia! Alleluia!

What does it mean to catch the light of Christ and make it shine through our own lives? What does it take for us to make that light to shine brightly enough that it *bursts* through the night, *touches* the truth, literally *burns* for what is right? That answer is different for each of us. We are blessed to have countless people in the UCC who have already walked that path. We are blessed to have a continuous flow of new examples of Jesus-followers who are making their life a light in the Southeast Conference, in the United Church of Christ, in the world. And we are blessed that the Source of this light, the Christ-flame Christ Jesus, is plentiful and never-ending.

Where do you see those lights in your life? How can you reflect that light for others? The Still-Speaking God has called us together as congregations, as conference, as the United Church of Christ to burn brightly and boldly. Shine, Beloved. Shine!

News from the Conference Office

Honoring Higher Education – A Southeast Conference Special Offering

Supporting the UCC/PCUSA/DOC Campus Ministry at University of Georgia

In September of 2021, the Southeast Conference announced a new partnership providing a UCC presence with the Presbyterian Student Center (PSC) at the University of Georgia (Athens, GA). The Center provides a welcoming place for students – providing a spiritual home that emphasizes inclusion, social justice, and spiritual growth. Since 1949, the PSC has been "a source of faithful hope and love on the UGA campus," stated UCC Minister Rev. Haley Lerner, who serves as a Campus Minister for the Center.

Just as the PSC is a fully UCC and fully PCUSA ministry (now with an additional partner in the Christian Church, Disciples of Christ), so, too, is the

Southeast Conference's commitment to fully support this partnership in ministry that is expanding and deepening the radically inclusive welcome of Jesus Christ on the UGA campus. With our PCUSA and DOC partners, we are responsible for supporting and nurturing the Center and its ministers, spiritually, communally, and financially.

As such, in celebration of UCC Higher Education Sunday, which was recognized on Sunday, October 29, and to honor our commitment to Jesus' prayer that we may all be one, the Southeast Conference Board of Directors has called for a special offering to support the PSC, a ministry of the Southeast Conference, United Church of Christ. Congregations are encouraged to receive this special offering during one of the Sundays of November. Individuals may also make contributions directly. We invite you, over the next several weeks, to send your gifts to the Southeast Conference, either by going to

<https://southeastconferenceunitedchurchofchrist-bloom.kindful.com/?campaign=1277568> or by mailing checks to the Southeast Conference, UCC, P.O. Box 1950, Decatur, GA 30031-1950. (Please be sure to write "PSC" in the memo line).

The PSC is doing great things to provide a safe and welcoming space for all of God's beautifully created college students at UGA while providing opportunities for them to live out the Gospel in their campus community and the world. Please help the Southeast Conference support and grow this vital ministry. To learn more about PSC, visit their website at <https://pscuga.org/> or their Facebook page!

Note: We look forward to additional opportunities to focus on campus and student ministries as we walk with students along their faith journeys throughout the Southeast Conference!

Ecclesiastical Council of Ceil Sheahan

The Commission on Ministry invites you to the Ecclesiastical Council of Ceil Sheahan on November 16, 2023 at 7 pm Eastern/6 pm Central on Zoom. [You can register to attend here](#). The Ecclesiastical Council is the last step on the path to Ordination for those seeking Ordained Ministerial Standing in the United Church of Christ.

Originally from Washington, DC, Ceil now calls Knoxville, Tennessee home. She is actively involved in various ministries at Church of the Savior-UCC, where



she shares her passions for liturgy, spirituality, and creation care. She has an MA in Clinical Pastoral Counseling from Emmanuel College, Boston, an M.Div. from Lexington Theological Seminary, Lexington, KY, and has completed two internships in CPE. Her idea of a perfect day involves rain, strong coffee, a good book, and purring lap cats.



Upper left going clockwise: New GMP Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson, Bethany Members and Pastor James Banks, Rev. Wood and former SECUCC Moderator Rev. Myrtle Johnson, Rev. Wood with the new GMP and Rev. Leslie Etheridge at the Florida Annual Gathering, Rev. Wood with CMs Rev. Lorraine Cenicerros and Rev. Tyler Connoley.

Where's the Conference Staff?

Can you find the Southeast Conference staff? Take a moment to catch some of the highlights of where we've been and where we're going.

Recently

- October 12-14 – Rev Wood attended the Florida Conference Annual Meeting in Orlando, participating as an ambassador of the SECUCC and a partner from the Southern Region UCC
- October 19-22 – Rev. Wood attended the United Church of Christ Board of Directors Meeting and the Service of Installation of Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson as General Minister and President of the

UCC, both to be held in Cleveland, OH.

- October 22 – Rev. Fosburgh preached at Pilgrimage UCC in Marietta GA and then celebrated with RIM Fellowship UCC in Atlanta for their 15th Anniversary.
- October 29 – Rev. Wood worshiped with Bethany Congregational UCC and Evergreen Congregational UCC Churches in Thomasville, GA. Rev. Fosburgh lead worship at her home congregation, Kirkwood UCC in Atlanta.

Looking Ahead

- November 2-8 – Rev. Wood Vacation
 - November 5 – Rev. Fosburgh will preach at Midway Congregational UCC in Midway GA.
 - November 11-13 – Rev. Wood will visit Pleasant Hill Community Church and Uplands Village
 - November 12 – Rev. Fosburgh will celebrate with First Congregational Church in Atlanta as they celebrate their 156th Anniversary.
 - November 19 – Rev. Fosburgh will join First Congregational Church in Birmingham for their Zoomcoming where she will bring the message for the day.
 - November 26 – Rev. Fosburgh will worship with Central Congregational in Atlanta.
 - November 28- December 1 – Rev. Fosburgh will gather with the Alliance of Associate Conference Ministers for their retreat in Phoenix, AZ.
 - November 30 – Rev. Wood will lead training program at Back Bay Mission
 - December 3 – Rev. Fosburgh will worship with Sankofa UCC in Atlanta.
 - December 11-15 – Rev. Wood will attend the UCC Council of Conference Ministers Annual Retreat in Tuscon, AZ.
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Prayer List

We are continuing the process of praying for authorized ministers, congregations, and ministry groups throughout 2023. We encourage you to include these prayer requests in your local church newsletter, share them with your prayer circle, and include them in your own prayers.

Week of November 5

- Covenant Community Church; Birmingham, Alabama
- Lawrence Clark
- James Johnson
- Bruce Schoup
- Jan Whiteman

Week of November 12

- Sankofa UCC, Atlanta, Georgia
- Valencia Jackson
- Kwan Hae Chi
- Charmaine Penn Johnson
- Edward Schneider
- Ted Elsenheimer

Churches in Transition

First Congregational, Savannah GA; Trinity Congregational, Athens AL; Holy Trinity Community Church, Nashville TN; Deer Lodge Congregational Church, Deer Lodge TN; Rush Memorial, Atlanta GA; Howard Congregational, Nashville TN; Community Congregational, Montgomery AL; Tuscaloosa UCC, Tuscaloosa AL.



This Month in SEC History: November 1994

by Mike Stroud

When one mentions that a UCC congregation is "Open and Affirming" these days, one immediately recognizes that it is a place welcoming without reservation toward any and all sexualities and gender identities. Of the 53 active churches on the Southeast Conference membership roll, some 23 now have adopted the program by the UCC's ONA Coalition. But nearly 30 years ago, it was up to one church to blaze the trail, as it were, for this present manifestation of hope in our region.

On November 19, 1994, Brookmeade Congregational Church (UCC) in Nashville became only the 145th UCC congregation nationally to ratify the program. But it was anything other than a means to grab publicity or "signal virtue" as some today might call it. It was rather, according to then-pastor Daniel Rosemergy, an extension of hospitality and love that had been evident in the church for some time.

As he indicated in an Alban Institute publication, *Dialogue on a Difficult Issue: Congregations Talking about Homosexuality*, Rosemergy reported its origin in the work Brookmeade Church had done with local efforts to help with HIV/AIDS sufferers in the Nashville area in the 1980s. This brought an atmosphere where some individuals, many for the first time in their adult lives, felt welcome to share their faith journeys and advocate for their rights as children of God.

After sitting on a panel about the topic at Vanderbilt University Divinity School, Rosemergy received a challenge from famed preacher William Sloane Coffin to have his church formally undergo the program. Undaunted by some initial opposition, the Board of Deacons underwent the full program of study from the Coalition, with the Church Council and, eventually, the whole church joining in extensive discussions. The several

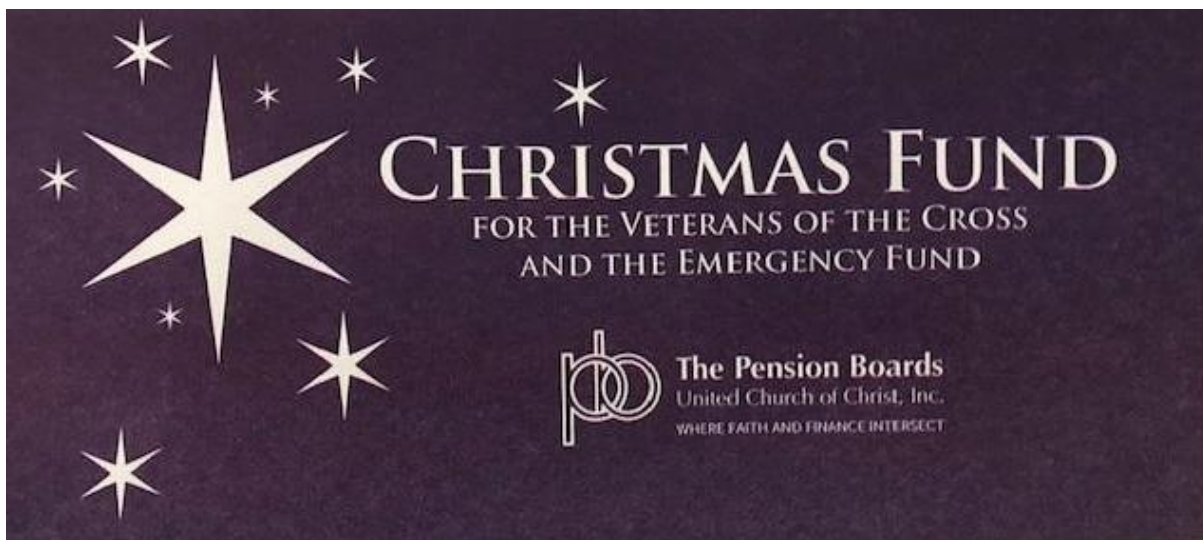
known gay and lesbian members played an especially key role in persuading people that the Coalition's goal of a statement being adopted would be a proper and fitting outcome of the church's long-standing belief in inclusion.

It all paid off in an overwhelming vote in favor of the statement. More remarkably, Rosemergy reported, no people left the church in protest over the action. As he summed up the whole process on page 100 of the book:

"... I realize how fortunate we were to have such visionary, courageous, and sensitive lay leadership who so carefully developed a proposal with broad-based input and who guided the process to include all congregants. They created opportunities and a safe setting for full and honest sharing and dialogue, and emphasized the importance of respecting different points of view and being committed to whatever the community decision would be ..."

Thanks to Brookmeade Congregational Church's profound witness in a time when it was all but unknown to Southern Christianity, the UCC has extended it to numerous other places where people need to hear that the Gospel is not one of exclusion, but inclusion.

News from the National Setting



The Christmas Fund

The Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross is an annual UCC offering that expresses thanks to retired and active UCC pastors and lay church workers and their families, providing direct assistance to supplement pensions, medical insurance costs, and funds to meet emergency needs.

This year's Christmas Fund theme is "Grace upon grace," from John 1:16: "From Christ's fullness we have all received, grace upon grace."

Join with others in the United Church of Christ to return "grace upon grace" to those who have given so much to each of us and to our churches.

Email Subscriptions from the United Church of Christ

Did you know that the United Church of Christ provides weekly and monthly newsletters from many ministries that share stories, action alerts, resources and educational opportunities and more? [Visit the UCC website and learn more about these valuable tools.](#)

Training Opportunities and Conferences

THE SHALOM SPIRITUAL CENTER
SHALOM-CENTERS.ORG

MEET OUR AWESOME PANELISTS

- REV. DR. AQUEELAH SALOME**
- REV. DR. BRENDA P. WALLACE**
- REV. DARLA BRODEN, ESQ.**
- REV. SHARON HIBBERT**

Presents

A HEALING COLLECTIVE TRAUMA RETREAT

Explore how African-American women respond to unprocessed trauma and how emotional wounds manifest. Learn ways to reduce trauma energy.

REGISTER TODAY!

Saturday, November 4th, 9:00 am - 4:30 pm
Central Congregational United Church of Christ
2676 Clairmont Road, Atlanta, GA 30329

GET DETAILS & REGISTER: <https://shalom-centers.org>

Registration includes breakfast and lunch.
Donation: \$35

(404) 780-4275 salome@shalom-centers.org

Scan for Details

Healing Collective Trauma Retreat

Atlanta, Georgia, November 4, 2023, 9:00 a.m - 4:30 p.m.

The Shalom Spiritual Center is pleased to announce its first annual [Healing Collective Trauma Retreat](#) on November 4th from 9:00 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. at Central Congregation United Church of Christ at 2676 Clairmont Rd, Atlanta, GA.

We will explore how African-American women respond to the scars of unprocessed trauma and how trauma emotional wounds manifest from one generation to the next. Our panelists will use a group-based process for discerning and reducing trauma energy, providing participants with the skills needed to facilitate integration and eventual healing. This retreat is designed for African-American women who are survivors of generational, racial, and sexual trauma.

Our panelists include Rev. Dr. Aqueelah Salome, Rev. Brenda Perry Wallace, MDiv., EdD, Rev. Darla Broden, MDiv., Esq., and Rev. Sharon F. Hibbert, MDiv., LCSW.

Registration Fee: Donation \$35* [REGISTER NOW](#).


** Female military veterans may attend for free, but please call to confirm. This will help us to ensure an accurate count.*

Registration includes:

- Continental breakfast and lunch at the event
- Monthly peer-to-peer support for 1 year (in-person and online)
- Monthly therapeutic encounters, upon request
- End-of-year retreat in 2024


If you have questions about this retreat, please contact Rev. Dr. Salome at salome@shalom-centers.org or call [\(404\) 780-4275](tel:(404)780-4275).

YOU CAN'T STOP JUSTICE!



A CONVERSATION BETWEEN
REP. JUSTIN PEARSON AND REV. BENJAMIN CHAVIS, JR.

A FREE GIVING TUESDAY EVENT ON NOVEMBER 28TH AT 12 PM ET



UCC Webinar with Justin Pearson of the Tennessee Three

In this [Giving Tuesday](#) event, two prophetic leaders will join in an online conversation about the never-ending river of justice that extends from one generation to the next. The Rev. Dr. Benjamin Chavis, Jr. coined the phrase "environmental racism" and helped lead the struggle for environmental justice, while Rep. Justin Pearson went from leading a grassroots environmental justice organization to serving as a state representative who made headlines around the world for his courageous stand in calling for commonsense gun legislation. Join us on November 28th at 12 pm ET to hear from these two leaders. [Register today!](#)



Winter Youth Retreat at Blowing Rock Conference Center

Blowing Rock Conference Center's Winter Youth Retreat (WYR) is a retreat

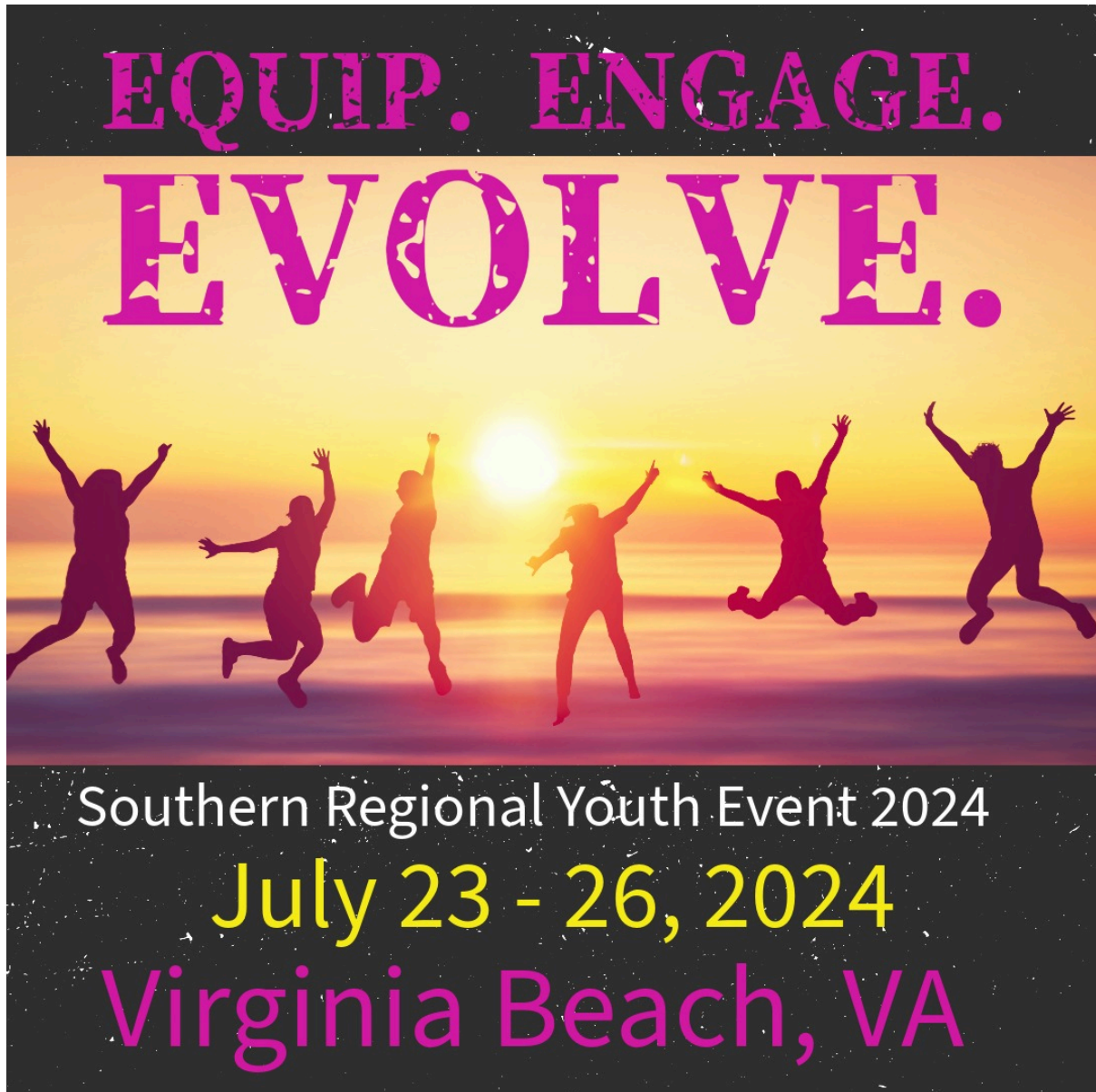
for UCC youth and like-minded churches from all over the South.

Youth and leaders are invited to come together for a weekend of worship, service, snow, and fun as we take time to build relationships and nurture our faith.

This year's theme and conversations will be focusing on our relationship with the earth and how God calls for us to care for all creation. We will explore this theme together through storytelling and the music of Alatheia as well as small group sessions designed to be hands-on experiences.

Winners of numerous acoustic music and songwriting awards, the duo Alatheia takes stories from their own lives and weaves them into music that's instantly relatable. Rooted in the Appalachian Mountains, Alatheia (Mandee Radford Langley and Cristi Johnson) create and perform original and traditional music in what they call Front-Porch-style, using eclectic instruments, thick modern harmonies and engaging storytelling of life on the road, taking cues from nature, their families, and neighbors along the way.

For registration and programming- [Click here!](#)



Conference Calendar

November 3 - November 4

[Healthy Boundaries 101: Fundamentals](#)

November 7 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm EST

[Clergy Conversations via Zoom](#)

November 9 @ 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm EST

[Board of Directors Meeting](#)

November 14 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm EST

[Clergy Conversations via Zoom](#)

November 16 @ 1:00 pm - 1:30 pm EST

[Live Harp Meditations for Ministers](#)

November 21 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm EST

[Clergy Conversations via Zoom](#)

November 28 @ 9:30 am - 11:00 am EST

[Zoom Conversation for Specialized Ministers](#)

November 28 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm EST

[Clergy Conversations via Zoom](#)

View the full calendar of events online: <https://www.secucc.org/events/>

Contact Us

Conference Minister: **Rev. Kim Wood;** kwood@secucc.org

Assoc. Conf. Minister: **Rev. Heather Fosburgh;** hfosburgh@secucc.org

Generosity Coordinator: **Min. Carrole Moss;** cmoss@secucc.org

Director of Communications: **Don Harris;** dharris@secucc.org

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